



Senator Sheila Kuehl

23rd District
Newsletter
March 2006

The Past and Present History of the Rocketdyne Test Site

The first of four articles

By Laura Plotkin

In the late 1940s, the federal government was looking for a remote site in Southern California in order to conduct nuclear reactor and rocket testing work that was considered too dangerous to perform in populated areas. This was the genesis of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL), located at the Los Angeles-Ventura County boundary high up in the hills overlooking Chatsworth and the Simi Valley. Over the next 60 years, the nearby population mushroomed, and, today, hundreds of thousands of people live nearby.

Over the years, ten nuclear reactors were constructed and operated at SSFL. A third of them suffered serious accidents. One of the accidents was particularly serious. In 1959, the coolant in the Sodium Reactor Experiment became blocked, causing the fuel to overheat. Despite high radiation readings and clear evidence that something was wrong, evidence now shows that operators kept the reactor running for weeks. When it was finally shut down, they discovered

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that a full one third of the fuel had experienced melting. The reactor had no containment structure (the thick concrete domes required of modern reactors to keep radioactivity from escaping) and, therefore, radioactivity was released directly into the environment. Nuclear scientists have estimated that the amount of radioactivity emitted from that accident alone could have been as much as 240 times that released from the Three Mile Island accident.

In 1964, a second reactor broke down, and, as a result, 80% of the fuel was damaged. Again, inexplicably, the operators kept the reactor running for a full year after

the breakdown even in the face of continuous readings indicating something was seriously wrong. In 1969, a third reactor suffered a similar accident, damaging a third of its fuel.

In addition, for several decades, reactor components were burned in open-air pits. Even though no radioactive or chemical wastes were ever allowed to be burned, the prohibition was repeatedly violated and the burn pit became significantly contaminated. On the rocket testing side of the property, approximately 30,000 rocket tests were conducted. Many of these used extremely toxic materials. TCE, for instance, a very toxic solvent, was used in massive quantities to wash off the rocket test stands, with the runoff percolating into the soil and groundwater. Half a million gallons of TCE are now in the soil and groundwater; by comparison, the permissible concentration of this solvent in drinking water is no more than five parts per billion.

In 1989, a federal Department of Energy study found widespread radioactive and chemical contamination throughout the site. The public disclosure of this study triggered involvement by the three Assemblymembers representing the area at the time – Terry Friedman, Richard Katz, and Cathie Wright. They pressed for effective cleanup of the site and epidemiological studies to determine if past exposures had harmed either workers or the public. In 1994, when Senator Kuehl was elected to the Assembly, succeeding Terry Friedman, she continued this work, and asked me to staff the is-

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Kuehl Names Ivy Bottini 2006 Woman of the Year

By Robin Podolsky

On March 20, 2006, at the State Capitol Building in Sacramento, State Senator Sheila Kuehl will present lifelong community activist Ivy Bottini to the State Legislature as the 23rd State Senate Districts' Woman of the Year.

State legislators throughout California will participate in the event, in which they will honor women from their districts for their exemplary commitment to community service and civic responsibility.

Ivy Bottini is a current Advisory Board member and a founder of the Gay and Lesbian Elder Housing Corporation, the first non-profit organization dedicated to building affordable apartments specifically for senior lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people. Bottini also co-chairs the Lesbian and Gay Advisory Board of the City of West Hollywood. She has also chaired that city's Addiction and Recovery Task Force and served as a Board Member of the West Hollywood Orchestra. When she was a resident of Los Angeles, Bottini helped to found the Lesbian/Gay Police Advisory Task Force.

She has been an advocate on behalf of women and the LGBT communities for four decades, beginning with



her work in the National Organization for Women in 1966. Since then, Bottini has remained active for social change. In 1981, she was the first open lesbian to serve on the California Commission on Aging, and in 1983 was a founding member of AIDS Project Los Angeles. She has been a committed activist for people with AIDS

since the beginning of the epidemic. Bottini has been consistently involved in electoral politics and mentored many young people through their introduction to the political process. She has been a devoted member of the Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles and a member of the Church's Board.

Bottini is also a visual artist and actor, whose work can be viewed on her website: ivybottini.com.

"I am so proud and happy to celebrate Ivy Bottini's contributions," says Senator Kuehl. "Ivy is a great role model as a community leader and active citizen. Her commitment to civil and human rights, civic vitality and, in particular, the advancement of LGBT people has inspired three generations. We are lucky to be able to honor her, and, in return, she brings honor to the 23rd District as our Woman of The Year."

Robin Podolsky is Senator Kuehl's Press Secretary.

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sue for her here in the district. We have been deeply involved ever since.

That same year, 1994, two workers at SSFL were killed in an explosion. Subsequent investigation by federal authorities determined that the explosion was caused by the burning of hazardous materials as a routine practice of illegal disposal of such materials. Rocketdyne, the site operator, pled guilty to three felony counts of illegal disposal of hazardous materials and paid a \$6.5 million fine.

It was recently revealed that a federal grand jury is investigating the site once again, this time apparently focused on releases of toxic materials offsite through surface water releases from the site.

This has been a frustrating process for Senator Kuehl, for me, and for many of our constituents. Decades after the initial contamination first occurred, cleanup is excruciatingly slow and of questionable thoroughness. Several years ago, the Department of Energy an-

nounced that it was not going to clean the radioactive contamination up to EPA standards, something it had promised to do in the mid-1990s. Instead, they indicated that 99% of the contaminated soil would be left in place and the site then released for unrestricted residential use. Two years ago, EPA formally stated that the proposed cleanup would leave the site unsafe for anything other than day hikes with limited picnicking. Yet the federal Department of Energy continues to move towards ending the cleanup and releasing the site for potential housing.

Senator Kuehl has repeatedly tried to get state legislation passed that would have required that the cleanup be consistent with DOE's past promises and EPA's concerns. Heavy lobbying by the owners of the site has been successful in heading off the legislation. The situation remains unresolved. More to follow in our next newsletters.

Laura Plotkin is Senator Kuehl's Chief Deputy in the District Office.

Senator Kuehl Chairs Hearings on Governor's Infrastructure Bonds

By Dennis O'Connor

On February 21st, the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee, chaired by Senator Sheila Kuehl, completed a series of five in-depth hearings on the Governor's proposed water and natural resources bonds.

Senator Kuehl set the tone at the first hearing, saying "The leadership of both parties in both houses has agreed that the relevant policy committees will hear the bond proposals, and Senator Perata has emphasized that the hearings should be substantive and should carefully consider the bond proposals because of their potential to affect every Californian."

Substantive they were. Each week the committee focused on only one or two issues.

The focus of the first hearing, on January 24, was the water bond in its entirety and the overarching policy questions raised by the Governor's proposal, including the troubling proposals to remove authority from the Legislature to appropriate the funds and approve specific projects. The following week the committee examined the flood aspects of the Governor's proposal, including steps that needed to be taken to truly protect threatened areas from flood. Next, on February 7, the committee explored the issues raised by the regional water management provisions. The statewide water management provisions including the Governor's proposals for more dams, were the subject of the hearing the following week. The final hearing, on February 21, addressed the Governor's proposed water fee and the virtually complete omission from the Governor's proposal for any funds for preservation of the environment and natural resources or for any deferred and present maintenance for our parks.

Each hearing started with a presentation by the administration on the topic for that hearing. Following extensive questions by the committee, Senator Kuehl would then invite comments from a response panel. Each response panelist was selected to provide unique and expert opinion on the Governor's proposal. Over the course of the five hearings, the panelists represented a virtual "who's who" of policy experts in the areas of flood, water and natural resources. Response panelists included:

- Richard Atwater, General Manager, Inland Empire Utilities Agency
- Stein Buer, Executive Director Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency

- Meg Catzen-Brown, Legislative Advocate, California Water Association
- Joe Countryman, Principal, MBK Engineers
- Peter Gleick, President, Pacific Institute
- Elizabeth Goldstein, President, California State Parks Foundation
- Martha Guzman, Legislative Advocate, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
- Marc Holmes, Public Member, California Bay-Delta Authority
- Steve Johnston, Director of California Strategic Initiatives, The Nature Conservancy
- Rande Knouse, Special Assistant to the General Manager, East Bay Municipal Utility District
- Betsy Marchand, Former Chairperson, State Reclamation Board
- Anne Notthoff, California Advocacy Director, Natural Resources Defense Council
- Randy Pool, General Manager, Sonoma County Water Authority
- Anthony Saracino, Director of Water Policy, The Nature Conservancy
- Tom Zuckerman, Co-Counsel, Central Delta Water Agency

In addition to the formal testimony, Senator Kuehl invited comments from the public at each hearing.

Senator Kuehl's committee staff are now drafting the formal report to the Conference Committee. Staff are basing the report on all of the following:

- The testimony presented in the hearing.
- The administration's written answers to formal questions posed by the committee.
- Letters received by committee members and staff.
- E-mail comments received by committee members and staff.
- Comments and suggestions from committee members
- Most importantly, specific direction from Senator Kuehl.

The report will set forth the Committee's recommendations for the rewrite of content and priorities for each section of the proposed flood and water bond, as well as additions taken from a separate proposed resource bond.

Senator Kuehl expects the report to be forwarded to the Conference Committee by the end of February.

Dennis O'Connor is the Water Consultant on Senator Kuehl's Natural Resources and Water Committee.

Governor's Infrastructure Package Falls Short

By Bill Craven

We've hit the part of the 2006 legislative session where many legislative committees are working overtime in trying to decide how to deal with the Governor's call for \$220 billion in investments in transportation, water, and other aspects of California's infrastructure. One thing is clear: The Governor almost totally ignored California's needs for state and local parks, regional conservancies such as the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the coast and ocean, and the pressing need to accommodate rapid population growth to the habitat needs of our fish and wildlife.

The Governor almost totally ignored California's needs for state and local parks, regional conservancies such as the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the coast and ocean, and the pressing need to accommodate rapid population growth to the habitat needs of our fish and wildlife.

On February 21, Senator Kuehl took the first major step in remedying the Governor's omissions by announcing that a \$4 billion parks and resources bond that has been considered in the Legislature for more than a year will be an integral part of the infrastructure package that the Legislature considers. At a hearing of the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee, which she chairs, Senator Kuehl declared that our "natural infrastructure" deserves to be treated equally with the infrastructure needs of our transportation system, our schools, our water systems, and our flood control levees. She said that SB 153 (Chesbro) with its \$4 billion in funding for natural resource projects would be a part of the infrastructure package.

The failure to invest in our natural infrastructure, Sen. Kuehl said, would mean that we are undervaluing the natural resources side of our infrastructure needs which California's voters have time and again voted to support. "Californians know that their water comes from rivers and streams and landscapes that we have to protect. They know instinctively that our lives are dependent on the health of our ecosystem," Kuehl declared. "Our natural infrastructure is as underfunded and is as much at-risk as our underfunded schools, highways, levees, and water supplies."

The next step will be for the report of the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee to be considered by

a special bond conference committee that is composed of 3 members each from the Assembly and the Senate. After that, the bond proposal will be considered by the leadership of both houses of the Legislature who will be meeting with the Governor. A decision will be made shortly whether a bond proposal will be presented to the voters for approval at either the June or the November elections of 2006.

Senator Kuehl has stated that she would strongly support a bond proposal to address the needs of schools, the transportation system, and which also includes adequate funding for the flood control, water system, and natural resources needs that face the state.

As detailed in Dennis O'Connor's article in this newsletter, the NRW Committee held five hearings on the Governor's proposal. In the last hearing, which included the proposed money for resources, Senator Kuehl pointed out that, of the \$57 billion in bonds that voters have approved in the last 10 years, less than 1 percent went to state parks. Because of a shortfall in general fund revenues for the past several years, the state parks department has a backlog of deferred maintenance projects that surpasses \$900 million. Past bonds were also inadequate to meet approximately \$900 million in grant applications from local parks districts. Senator Kuehl said it would be her hope to completely eliminate the deferred maintenance backlog at state parks and to provide \$1 billion for local and urban parks in the next resources bond.

While Senator Kuehl praised the Chesbro bond for its completeness, she said she would also work to increase the funding for projects at Lake Tahoe and the Salton Sea and to start a new program to assist coastal communities and counties to complete their "local coastal plans" in order to comply with the Coastal Act.

Bill Craven is Chief Consultant to the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee.

Senator Sheila Kuehl invites Oxnard businesses to an Employment Training Panel (ETP) Workshop

Saturday, March 11, 2006

2pm – 4pm

Downtown Oxnard Library

251 South "A" Street, Oxnard, CA 93030

The Employment Training Panel (ETP) is a California State agency providing job training funds to employers in California.

Please come to learn about funding opportunities that may benefit your business and your employees.

For more information or to RSVP (before March 7th) please contact: Hilda @ 310-441-9084 or Hilda.Garcia@sen.ca.gov

UC Irvine Professor Joins Team Kuehl During Sabbatical

By Senator Sheila Kuehl

This year, I am extremely pleased to have Dr. Alberto Manetta spending his sabbatical in my Capitol Office. Dr. Manetta is the Senior Associate Dean for Educational Affairs at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) School of Medicine and a Gynecologic Oncologist and Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, division of Gynecologic Oncology and Department of Internal Medicine, division of Epidemiology.

A native of Argentina, he came to this country in 1968 to begin his residency in obstetrics and gynecology. Al (as he insists we refer to him) has a great variety of interests and talents. His primary research interest is in the area of cancer prevention, specifically cervical cancer. He is currently funded by the National Institutes of Health to study means of simplifying the screening of cervical cancer in minorities. His clinical awards include Good Housekeeping's "Best Doctor for Women in America."

He has a strong commitment to medical education as evidenced by his receipt of numerous teaching awards and by his development of several outstanding programs on physician training during his tenure as head of the Office of Educational Affairs. Most recently, he developed and implemented the Program in Medical



Education for the Latino Community (PRIME-LC). He instituted this five-year combined degree training program at UCI in response to an increasing demand for physicians who are culturally sensitive and linguistically competent to address specific needs of the Latino community. The program also prepares students for leadership roles in the health care community and for academic roles that can enhance the visibility of health care issues in the Latino community. PRIME-LC is the first program of this nature in the country and will soon be implemented by the UC system in its four other medical schools.

His interests in higher education and cancer prevention led him to my office. He indicated to us that he wanted to gain a better understanding of the legislative and budget process in order to more effectively help ensure access to health care and health care education to all the state's residents. Dr. Manetta is actively involved with several non-profit organizations, including Latino Health Access, where he serves as chairman of the board of directors.

Al is married and has two adult children and a beautiful grandchild. He is also an accomplished wood turner whose crafts are shown in Southern California galleries.

My staff and I are very happy to have such a distinguished scientist and educator in our office.

Addressing Linkages Between Air and Water Pollution

By Marie Liu

What goes up, must come down – turns out that this popular adage also applies to air pollution. Studies in the Los Angeles region have shown that a significant amount of pollutants in our waterways, including trace metals, originate from air pollution. These findings were discussed in a recent seminar moderated by Bill Craven, Senator Kuehl's chief consultant on Natural Resources.

Air pollutants, both in the form of particles and gases, can be transferred to water by settling directly onto a water surface or by settling on land and being washed into the waterway with the next storm. Pollutants can also be washed out of the air directly by rain.

While scientists have studied the effect of atmospheric deposition on the environment in several different

situations, much of this research has focused on areas that have different climates and air pollutants than the Los Angeles area. For example, Los Angeles will generally have higher levels of trace metals in the air than rural areas because of industrial activity and vehicular traffic. The Southern California Coastal Water Research Project aimed to close this information gap. They have conducted several studies showing that atmospheric deposition may be responsible for as much as 57-100% of the trace metals found in Los Angeles' stormwater and a substantial amount of the trace metals found in coastal areas including Santa Monica Bay.

Their startling results point to the need to change the way lawmakers and regulators address both air and water pollution. For the most part, water and air pollution are subject to a different set of regulations and laws. But, as shown by these studies, the division be-

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Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking from Housing and Employment Discrimination

By Tam Ma

SB 1745, authored by Senator Kuehl, and introduced in February, will protect the victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking from discrimination in employment and housing and further protect the safety of those victims who are renters. Innocent victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking often face twin obstacles of discrimination in housing and employment as they struggle to put their lives back together after confronting violence.

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and their children in California and across the nation. Victims may be denied housing opportunities or may be evicted from their housing for no other reason than their status as a victim. The police may be dispatched to a victim's home in order to protect her. They may remove the abuser from the home so that she can remain safely in her residence with the kids. In too many instances, however, she is then evicted from her housing for "causing a disruption" or for "participating in criminal activity"! Or her landlord may refuse to let her stay in her apartment after her husband or partner, who may be the primary wage earner, has left. A victim may be forced to flee an abusive partner and to terminate a lease before its full term. Under current

Between July and September 2005, the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence (CAEPV) polled 1,200 full-time employed adults across the US in the first-ever national benchmarking telephone survey regarding domestic violence and its impact on the workplace. Among the major findings: 44% of full-time employed adults who were surveyed had personally experienced the effects of domestic violence in their workplaces.

Source: Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence (www.caepv.org)

law, she is often hit with penalties and debt she cannot afford, destroying her credit and making it very difficult for her to find new housing. If she is refused new housing because of this history of violence against her, she may be homeless. A victim of domestic violence is often forced to choose between protecting her housing, which is a precious, and dwindling commodity, and returning to her abusive partner and the continuing cycle of violence. The social costs are enormous with respect to medical care, emergency shelter, government benefits and unnecessary court proceedings, and the personal costs are immeasurable.

Even after a victim cuts off an abuser at home, the perpetrator may come to her work, make harassing phone calls or contacting co-workers. A recent survey conducted by major corporations concluded that 44% of employed adults surveyed have personally experienced the effects of domestic violence at their workplace. Following reports of violence, some employers terminate employees simply because they are victims.

Being a victim of a robbery or a theft is not a reason to evict a tenant or to fire an employee. A person's status as a crime victim should not be a basis for determining whether or not she would be or is a good tenant or employee. While it is understandable that landlords and employers want to consider whether an applicant has committed a violent crime, the tenant's or employee's status as an innocent victim of crime should not be relevant.

For all these reasons, Senator Kuehl has introduced SB 1745, which will amend California statutes that prohibit discrimination in housing and in employment against specifically identified protected persons by adding victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking to those protected. The bill also strikes a reasonable balance between the needs of landlords and the

Please join Senator Sheila Kuehl for a Community Forum on Gang Violence in Santa Monica

**Update on Commitments made by Action Partners
Public Input
Next Steps**

Saturday March 18th, 2006
10 AM to Noon
John Adams Middle School
2425 16th Street

To RSVP or for more information,
contact Hilda Garcia at (310) 441 – 9084 or
hilda.garcia@sen.ca.gov

"I defy anyone to spend 15 minutes with any gang member and say that's not an interesting human being with a heart and soul and goodness, whose damage and obstacles have been tough... A human being is a whole lot better than the worse thing he's ever done."

-Father Greg Boyle

DISCRIMINATION continued on page 7.

safety needs of victims by allowing them time to move from their current rental housing before the end of the lease term without incurring penalties. It will require landlords to change the locks of dwellings at the victim's expense, and prevent them from providing abusers with copies of the keys.

This bill will ensure that victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking can depend on stable housing when they need it most, when the alternatives are homelessness or going back to an abusive home. It will also enhance the victims' ability to protect their jobs, which if lost, exacerbate their trauma through a snowball effect: eviction for non-payment of rent, and subsequent dislocation of victims and their children and homelessness.

Several states, including Washington, North Carolina and Rhode Island, recently passed legislation adding victim status to their anti-discrimination law, and expressly prohibiting housing discrimination against victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Eleven other states have passed laws providing protections for domestic violence victims that may include permission for victims to terminate leases, have their locks changed, call the police without repercussion and/or defend against evictions based on criminal activity or lease violations.

In the recently passed Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Congress recognized that there is "...a strong link between domestic violence and homelessness...[and that]...women and families across the country are being discriminated against, denied access to, and even evicted from public and subsidized housing because of their status as victims of domestic violence." Congress included new provisions addressing

POLLUTION continued from page 5.

tween air and water pollution is, in many ways, artificial, and needs to be addressed. In February, the Air Resources Board and the State Water Resources Control Board held their first joint workshop to discuss the gaps in the state's regulatory structure that will need to be closed in order to address this problem, the partnerships that will help develop solutions, and the research that still needs to be done. Regulators and the Legislature will also need to establish better lines of communication in order to help remove statutory barriers to addressing air and water pollution together.

By recognizing the connection between air and water pollution, regulators and lawmakers will be able to better protect human and ecological health.

Marie is a Consultant to the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee.

this discrimination under Title VI: Housing Opportunities and Safety for Battered Women and Children.

Amending California law will send a clear message to landlords and tenants, employers and employees, that it is unlawful to discriminate against victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking based on their status as victims of these crimes. SB 1745 is co-sponsored by the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, American Civil Liberties Union, California National Organization for Women, and the Legal Aid Society - Employment Law Center.

Tam Ma is a Policy Consultant in Senator Kuehl's Capitol Office.

Senator Kuehl's Committee Assignments

Every piece of legislation is heard first in the policy committees of the house of origin (Assembly or Senate), also called **Standing Committees**, which meet on a regular basis throughout the year. Many standing committees have **Sub-Committees** that focus on particular issues. **Select Committees** study California policy issues and problems in order to develop longer range solutions. Senate President Pro Tempore Don Perata has appointed Senator Kuehl to the following committees for the 2006 Legislative Session:

Standing Committees:

- ◆ Natural Resources and Water (Chair)
- ◆ Agriculture Committee
- ◆ Budget and Fiscal Review
- ◆ Environmental Quality
- ◆ Government Modernization, Efficiency and Accountability
- ◆ Health
- ◆ Judiciary
- ◆ Labor and Industrial Relations

Subcommittees:

- ◆ Budget - Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources, Energy, and Environment (Chair)
- ◆ Environmental Quality – Toxic Materials
- ◆ Health - Aging & Long Term Care
- ◆ Health - Stem Cell Research Oversight
- ◆ Judiciary – Anti-Competitive Conduct and the Marketplace
- ◆ Natural Resources & Water – Delta Resources

Select Committees:

- ◆ School Safety (Chair)
- ◆ Health Insurance Crisis in California (Chair)
- ◆ California Correctional System
- ◆ Children, Youth, and Families
- ◆ Developmental Disabilities & Mental Health
- ◆ Perchlorate Contamination